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RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 5323
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 1194
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RUEHBD/AMCONSUL PERTH 1065
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JAKARTA 001594

SIPDIS

DEPT. FOR EAP, EAP/MTS, EAP/MLS, DRL, DRL/AWH
NSC FOR EPHU

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/22/2018
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KJUS](#) [PHUM](#) [ID](#)
SUBJECT: FORMER INTELLIGENCE OFFICIAL STANDS TRIAL IN MUNIR
CASE

REF: JAKARTA 1252 AND PREVIOUS

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Classified By: Pol/C Joseph L. Novak, reasons 1.4(b+d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: The trial of former Indonesian Intelligence Agency (BIN) Deputy Director Muchdi Purwoprandjono began August 21 in Jakarta. Muchdi--who is also a former commander of Kopassus (Army special forces)--is charged with complicity in the premeditated murder of well-known human rights activist Munir Said Thalib in 2004. Prosecutors used the first day to lay out key aspects of their case against Muchdi. The much-anticipated court case is a test for respect for human rights and accountability in Indonesia.
END SUMMARY.

START OF MUNIR-RELATED TRIAL

12. (C) An important human rights trial has begun in Indonesia. On August 21 in the South Jakarta District Court, prosecutors read an indictment detailing charges against Muchdi, a former BIN official and also a former Army Special Forces (KOPASSUS) Commander. He is the first BIN official--and first Kopassus commander--ever to stand trial for a human rights crime. Poloff and Pol FSN attended yesterday's hearing. The court was packed with supporters of Muchdi and handful of human rights advocates and others who demand justice in the Munir case.

13. (C) Muchdi is charged with "intentionally causing" the premeditated murder of human rights activist Munir Said Thalib, killed with arsenic in September 2004 en route from Jakarta to Amsterdam on board the state airline, Garuda (ref A). Prosecutors said Muchdi recruited Garuda employee Pollycarpus Budihari Priyanto to carry out the plan. (Note: In January, the Supreme Court sentenced Pollycarpus to 20 years and he is currently in prison.) Muchdi could face up to 20 years or the death penalty. Our understanding is Muchdi plans to put up a full-scale defense. The next hearing is scheduled for September 2.

PROSECUTORS REVIEW CHARGES

¶4. (C) Prosecutors told the court that Muchdi had a personal motive for Munir's murder. Munir--an outspoken critic of impunity in the Armed Forces and intelligence agencies--exposed Kopassus' apparent involvement in activists' disappearances in 1997-1998. Munir's investigation allegedly led to Muchdi's dismissal soon after his inauguration as KOPASSUS Commander, prosecutors maintained. Prosecutors told the court that Muchdi held a personal grudge against Munir for ending his military career.

¶5. (C) Indonesia's human rights community is watching the case closely. While praising the bringing of the case, Usman Hamid, a human rights lawyer involved in the case, told poloff the focus on Muchdi's personal motive might cut off the possibility of pursuing other intelligence officials suspected to be involved in the murder. He said other high-level BIN officials were involved, but proof revolved around testimony by a key witness, which observers close to the case say may be a current military officer and witness to discussions planning Munir's murder (ref A).

¶6. (C) Suciwati, Munir's widow, told poloff she hoped the ongoing investigation and proceedings would lead to bringing to justice a wider network of masterminds behind the murder, including Gen. (ret.) and former BIN Head Hendropriyono.

¶7. (C) Muchdi supporters in the courtroom muttered that Muchdi was innocent and "a victim" of a smear campaign. Translations of a European Union statement and letters from the U.S. Congress and U.S. NGO Human Rights First regarding the case were distributed, labeled: "Muchdi is a victim of

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foreign intervention!" The courtroom was packed with right wing militants known to have allegiances with some former military officials. A handful of members of Gerindra, former General Prabowo's (small) party, also watched the court proceedings. (Note: Muchdi and Prabowo had a close relationship during their military careers. Prabowo is implicated in violence in the late 1990's. He is now involved in politics.)

A KEY CASE

¶8. (C) Muchdi's court proceedings mark progress in a case many observers see as a "test" of Indonesia's respect for human rights and accountability. The fact that a former Kopassus commander has been brought up on charges is also significant. At this point, prosecutors seem confident about their case, but there is little doubt that Muchdi will put up a strong defense. As noted, he has supporters who are sure to crowd the courtroom and try to sway public opinion and build political pressure to get their man off the hook.

HUME